

VZCZCXRO4411
OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHML #3637 3170811
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 130811Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8847
INFO RUEHBD/AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN IMMEDIATE 5566
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE 2447
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 9720
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA IMMEDIATE 6694
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR IMMEDIATE 0741
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 003637

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS, EAP/PD (MCLOUGHLIN), ISN
SECDEF FOR AP/ISA (TOOLAN)
JOINT STAFF FOR CLEMMONS
NSC FOR E.PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2017

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#) [KPAO](#) [MASS](#) [MPOS](#)

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINES -- GREAT WHITE FLEET COMMEMORATION

REF: STATE 152754

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) After lengthy discussion of the strategic and political impact that the Great White Fleet commemoration initiative could have on bilateral relations, Post declines participation in the commemoration and recommends against a visit to the Philippines. The United States and the Philippines enjoy a warm and close relationship between our peoples and governments, as borne out by the many U.S. ship visits we support. In 2007, the Mission has seen more than 70 port calls by U.S. Navy vessels, and the resulting goodwill they generate is a powerful public affairs tool that highlights the Navy's role in support of American foreign policy, to include humanitarian relief and crisis response. In addition, the USNS Mercy visited the Philippines in 2006, providing vital medical support in some of the most isolated and impoverished areas of the country.

12. (C) However, Post believes that the arrival the Great White Fleet would not meaningfully augment the already strong U.S. military and naval assets in the Philippines. As noted in reftel, the initial voyage of the Great White Fleet coincided with U.S. fighting against Philippine rebels. For this reason, the visit could have clear negative historical and symbolic overtones in the Philippines, particularly among highly nationalistic political, economic, academic, and journalistic elites. Filipinos remember positively the gifts of democratic institutions, along with public education and health, but evoking the Great White Fleet would also stir memories of a period also marked by military conflict with a nascent Philippine independence movement. Communist and Muslim terrorist groups in the Philippines also seek to make use of any negative public reaction to boost their local support.

13. (C) The strategic message of the Great White Fleet commemoration -- that the United States remains involved in the region -- already is demonstrated by a variety of means: our robust schedule of ship visits, large-scale military exercises like Balikatan and PHIBLEX/Talon Vision, and the civil-military and counterterrorism activities of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines. Filipinos already believe the USG to be engaged in Southeast Asia, and they

support our presence. Additionally, there is enduring public resistance to the concept of re-establishing U.S. military bases in the Philippines, an issue that inadvertently might be rekindled by a Great White Fleet commemoration visit. In short, a visit might generate a negative reaction rather than produce public goodwill.

¶4. (C) Post wishes success to all involved with the Great White Fleet commemoration in their visits around the world, but does not recommend including the Philippines in the itinerary.

KENNEY